



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:
Nov 16, 2012

For More Information, Contact:
Michelle Walker
Tobacco Prevention and Control Program
North Dakota Department of Health
Phone: 701.328.2315
E-mail: mlwalker@nd.gov

World Prematurity Day Recognized on November 17

BISMARCK, N.D. – November 17, 2012, has been designated as World Prematurity Day. The North Dakota Department of Health's Partnership for Tobacco Prevention and Cessation for Women of Reproductive Age and the March of Dimes of North Dakota would like to raise awareness about the seriousness of premature birth, detail which risk factors are involved, and describe how to avoid certain lifestyle risk factors.

Prematurity is the leading killer of America's newborns. One in eight babies in the U.S. is born prematurely. Those who survive often have lifelong health problems, including cerebral palsy, intellectual disabilities, chronic lung disease, blindness and hearing loss. The goals of the World Prematurity Day (sponsored by the March of Dimes) are to reduce the rate of premature birth and encourage public awareness about the problem of premature birth.

"The March of Dimes currently grades North Dakota with a B on our prematurity report card," said Reba Mathern-Jacobson, Director of Program Services at the March of Dimes North Dakota Chapter. "As of 2011, North Dakota had a rate of 9.9 percent of all births being premature. This is an improvement over the 12.1 percent rate from five years ago. The national goal set by the March of Dimes is 9.6 percent. To help more moms have full-term pregnancies and healthy babies, North Dakota can make sure all women receive health care before and during pregnancy, help women stop smoking and reduce the number of elective inductions and cesarean sections done before 39 weeks gestation."

Three groups of women are at greatest risk of preterm labor and birth:

- Women who have had a previous preterm birth
- Women who are pregnant with twins, triplets or more
- Women with certain uterine or cervical abnormalities

– more –

600 E. Boulevard Ave. Dept. 301, Bismarck, North Dakota 58505-0200
Phone: 701.328.2372 Fax: 701.328.4727 E-mail: health@nd.gov

Visit the health department home page at www.ndhealth.gov.

Women with these risk factors, and other women who are pregnant, should be aware of certain lifestyle factors that may put them at greater risk of preterm labor. These factors include:

- Late or no prenatal care
- Smoking
- Drinking alcohol
- Using illegal drugs
- Exposure to the medication DES
- Domestic violence, including physical, sexual or emotional abuse
- Lack of social support
- Extremely high levels of stress
- Long working hours with long periods of standing
- Exposure to certain environmental pollutants

Tobacco use and smoking in women of reproductive age is being addressed by the Partnership for Tobacco Prevention and Cessation for Women of Reproductive Age group.

“North Dakota has a high rate of pregnant women who smoke (16%). We encourage all women to get help quitting if they are pregnant or plan on becoming pregnant,” said Michelle Walker, director of the North Dakota Department of Health’s Tobacco Prevention and Control Program. “Not only can smoking harm a baby when a woman is pregnant, but the secondhand smoke can also be a contributor to a higher risk of sudden infant death syndrome after the baby is born.”

For free help with quitting tobacco, visit **www.ndhealth.gov/ndquits** or call 1.800.QUIT.NOW (1.800.784.8669).

Pregnant women also can find help with quitting smoking through local Baby and Me Tobacco Free programs. These programs offer free diapers for moms who quit and stay quit, and are available through:

- Walsh County Public Health
- First District Health Unit
- Central Valley Health District
- Foster County Public Health
- Fargo Cass Public Health

For more information about premature births, or to join in giving all babies a strong start, contact Jacobson at the March of Dimes North Dakota Chapter by calling 701.552.9180 or e-mailing rmathern-jacobson@marchofdimes.com. For more information about the effects of tobacco use and tools for people who want to quit, contact Michelle Walker, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.2315.

– 30 –

Please note: To access archived news releases and other information, visit the North Dakota Department of Health Press Room at www.nddohpressroom.gov.

Find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ndhealth or Twitter at twitter.com/nddoh.